

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A portable electronic device for use in a medical monitoring system that generates notification messages indicating that a patient being monitored may have a condition that requires attention and wirelessly transfers the notification messages to the portable electronic device, the portable electronic device comprising:

5 a processing circuit configured to receive the notification messages indicating that the patient being monitored may have a condition that requires attention; and

an identification device coupled to the processing circuit and configured to input data representative of an identity of a subject of interest from an information source at a distance from the identification device.

10 2. The portable electronic device of claim 1, wherein the identification device comprises a barcode scanner.

3. The portable electronic device of claim 1, wherein the identification device comprises a radio frequency identification circuit.

15 4. The portable electronic device of claim 1, wherein the identification device is configured to input data representative of an identity of the user.

5. The portable electronic device of claim 4, wherein the processing circuit is configured to adjust functions of the portable electronic device based on the identity of the user determined by the identification device.

20 6. The portable electronic device of claim 5, wherein the function is a display of data and the processing circuit is configured to customize a form in which data is displayed based on the identity of the user.

7. The portable electronic device of claim 4, wherein the information representative of the identity of the user input by the identification device is used to control which notification messages are received by the portable electronic device.

8. The portable electronic device of claim 1, wherein information received from the subject identification device may be used to control which notification messages are received by the portable electronic device, adjust functions of the portable electronic device, prompt display of data associated with the subject of interest, and facilitate distribution of medicine.

9. The portable electronic device of claim 1, further comprising:

an audio signal input device;

an audio signal output device; and

a wireless transceiver,

10 wherein the processing circuit is further configured to facilitate transfer of voice data to the audio signal output and from the audio signal input by way of the wireless transceiver.

10. The portable electronic device of claim 9, wherein the processing circuit is further configured to implement organizer programs.

11. The portable electronic device of claim 9, wherein the wireless transceiver uses a cellular data transfer protocol.

12. The portable electronic device of claim 1, wherein the processing circuit is further configured to implement an organizer function.

13. The portable electronic device of claim 12, wherein the organizer function includes at least one of a calendar function and a task list function.

14. The portable electronic device of claim 12, wherein the organizer function includes a calendar function and a task list function.

15. The portable electronic device of claim 1, wherein the notification message includes physiologic data acquired from the patient.

16. The portable electronic device of claim 15, wherein the physiologic data includes electrocardiogram waveform data.

17. The portable electronic device of claim 1, further comprising a housing containing the processing circuit and the identification device, the housing configured
5 to be rugged.

18. The portable electronic device of claim 17, wherein the housing has a volume that is no more than about 35 cubic inches.

19. The portable electronic device of claim 1, further comprising a housing configured to be free of bacterial growth.

20. A portable electronic device for use in a medical monitoring system that generates notification messages indicating that a patient being monitored may have a condition that requires attention and wirelessly transfers the notification messages to the portable electronic device, the portable electronic device comprising:

5 a wireless transceiver configured to receive the notification messages; and

a processing circuit configured to receive the notification messages from the wireless transceiver, send a control signal to alert a user to the receipt of the notification message, and implement an organizer function.

21. The portable electronic device of claim 20, wherein the processing
10 circuit is configured to exclude installation of at least some programs unrelated to treatment of patients.

22. The portable electronic device of claim 20, wherein the organizer function includes at least one of a calendar function and a task list function.

23. The portable electronic device of claim 20, wherein the organizer
15 function includes a calendar function and a task list function.

24. The portable electronic device of claim 20, wherein the organizer function includes a task list function.

25. The portable electronic device of claim 24, wherein the processing
20 circuit is configured to supply data for a task to be added to a task list of the task list function based on a notification message received by the processing circuit.

26. The portable electronic device of claim 24, further comprising a barcode scanner coupled to the processing circuit.

27. The portable electronic device of claim 20, wherein programs are
25 excluded from being implemented by the processing circuit based on the programs' lack of relation to a treatment of patients.

28. The portable electronic device of claim 20, wherein the organizer function includes a calendar function.

29. The portable electronic device of claim 28, wherein the processing circuit is configured to supply data for an entry to be added to a calendar of the
5 calendar function based on a notification message received by the processing circuit.

30. The portable electronic device of claim 28, further comprising a radio frequency identification circuit coupled to the processing circuit.

31. The portable electronic device of claim 20, wherein the processing circuit is configured such that a user may transfer organizer data from a personal
10 organizer to the organizer function implemented by the processing circuit.

32. The portable electronic device of claim 20, wherein the notification message includes physiologic data acquired from the patient.

33. The portable electronic device of claim 32, wherein the physiologic data includes electrocardiogram data.

15 34. The portable electronic device of claim 20, wherein the processing circuit is not configured to implement programs unrelated to treatment of patients.

35. The portable electronic device of claim 20, wherein the processing circuit is not configured to implement an MP3 player function.

20 36. The portable electronic device of claim 20, further comprising a housing containing the processing circuit and the identification device, the housing configured to be rugged.

37. The portable electronic device of claim 36, wherein the housing has a volume that is no more than about 35 cubic inches.

25 38. The portable electronic device of claim 20, further comprising a housing configured to be free of bacterial growth.

39. The portable electronic device of claim 20, wherein a notification program responsive to the notification message is given a higher priority than an organizer program implementing the organizer functions.

40. The portable electronic device of claim 39, wherein the organizer
5 program is minimized when a notification message is received.

41. The portable electronic device of claim 39, wherein a reminder alarm of an organizer program is displayed differently when a notification message is received.

42. The portable electronic device of claim 39, wherein data from the
10 organizer program is not displayed when the alarm notification program is active due to a receipt of a notification message.

43. A portable electronic device for use in a medical monitoring system that generates notification messages indicating that a patient being monitored may have a condition that requires attention and wirelessly transfers the notification messages to the portable electronic device, the portable electronic device comprising:

5 an audio signal input;

an audio signal output;

a wireless transceiver configured to transfer data using a cellular protocol; and

a processing circuit configured to receive the notification messages, generate a control signal to display physiological data associated with the notification message, and to facilitate transfer of voice data to the audio signal output and from the audio signal input by way of the wireless transceiver, facilitating transfer of voice data including initiating calls to other cellular devices and receiving calls from other cellular devices.

44. The portable electronic device of claim 43, wherein the processing circuit is configured to exclude installation of at least some programs unrelated to treatment of patients.

45. The portable electronic device of claim 43, wherein a notification program responsive to the notification message is given a higher priority than an phone program configured to initiate and receive calls.

20 46. The portable electronic device of claim 45, wherein the phone program is minimized when a notification message is received.

47. The portable electronic device of claim 45, wherein an incoming call notification of the phone program is displayed differently when a notification message is received.

48. The portable electronic device of claim 45, wherein data from the phone program is not displayed when the alarm notification program is active due to a receipt of a notification message.

5 49. The portable electronic device of claim 43, wherein programs are excluded from being implemented by the processing circuit based on the programs' lack of relation to a treatment of patients.

50. The portable electronic device of claim 43, further comprising a housing containing the processing circuit and the identification device, the housing configured to be rugged.

10 51. The portable electronic device of claim 50, wherein the housing has a volume that is no more than about 35 cubic inches.

52. The portable electronic device of claim 43, further comprising a housing configured to be free of bacterial growth.

15 53. The portable electronic device of claim 52, wherein the housing is configured to be free of bacterial growth by being configured to withstand application of an anti-bacterial substance.

54. The portable electronic device of claim 53, wherein the housing comprises an anti-bacterial material.

20 55. The portable electronic device of claim 43, wherein the processing circuit is not configured to implement programs unrelated to treatment of patients.

56. The portable electronic device of claim 43, wherein the processing circuit is not configured to implement an MP3 player function.

57. The portable electronic device of claim 43, wherein the physiologic data comprises ECG data.

58. A portable electronic device for use in a medical monitoring system that generates notification messages indicating that a patient being monitored may have a condition that requires attention and wirelessly transfers the notification messages to the portable electronic device, the portable electronic device comprising:

- 5 an audio signal input;
- an audio signal output;
- a wireless transceiver; and

10 a processing circuit configured to receive the notification messages indicating that the patient being monitored may have a condition that requires attention, send a control signal to alert a user to the receipt of the notification message, and implement an organizer function, and to facilitate transfer of voice data to the audio signal output and from the audio signal input by way of the wireless transceiver, and

a barcode scanner coupled to the processing circuit.

59. The portable electronic device of claim 58, wherein the processing
15 circuit is configured to exclude installation of at least some programs unrelated to treatment of patients.

60. The portable electronic device of claim 58, wherein a notification
program responsive to the notification message is given a higher priority than an
phone program configured to initiate and receive calls and an organizer program
20 configured to implement organizer functions.

61. The portable electronic device of claim 58, wherein the notification
message includes physiologic data acquired from the patient.

62. The portable electronic device of claim 61, wherein the physiologic
data includes electrocardiogram waveform data.

63. The portable electronic device of claim 58, wherein the identification device is configured to input data representative of an identity of the user.

64. The portable electronic device of claim 63, wherein the processing circuit is configured to adjust functions of the portable electronic device based on the
5 identity of the user determined by the identification device.

65. The portable electronic device of claim 63, wherein the information representative of the identity of the user input by the identification device is used to control which notification messages are received by the portable electronic device.

66. A portable electronic device for use in a medical monitoring system that generates notification messages indicating that a patient being monitored may have a condition that requires attention and wirelessly transfers the notification messages to the portable electronic device, the portable electronic device comprising:

- 5 an audio signal input;
- an audio signal output;
- a wireless transceiver; and

10 a processing circuit configured to receive the notification messages indicating that the patient being monitored may have a condition that requires attention, send a control signal to alert a user to the receipt of the notification message, and implement an organizer function, and to facilitate transfer of voice data to the audio signal output and from the audio signal input by way of the wireless transceiver, and

a radio frequency circuit coupled to the processing circuit and configured to receive data comprising a code associated with an identity of a subject of interest.

15 67. The portable electronic device of claim 66, wherein the processing circuit is configured to exclude installation of at least some programs unrelated to treatment of patients.

20 68. The portable electronic device of claim 66, wherein a notification program responsive to the notification message is given a higher priority than an phone program configured to initiate and receive calls and an organizer program configured to implement organizer functions.

69. The portable electronic device of claim 66, wherein the notification message includes physiologic data acquired from the patient.

25 70. The portable electronic device of claim 66, wherein the radio frequency circuit comprises a radio frequency identification (RFID) circuit.

71. An alarm notification system for use in a medical monitoring system configured to monitor a patient, comprising:

a first processing circuit configured to receive data indicating that the patient being monitored may have a condition that requires attention and to send notification messages based on the data indicating that the patient being monitored may have a condition that requires attention; and

a portable electronic device comprising,

a second processing circuit configured to receive the notification messages indicating that the patient being monitored may have a condition that requires attention; and

an identification device coupled to the processing circuit and configured to input data representative of an identity of a subject of interest from an information source at a distance from the identification device.

72. The system of claim 71, wherein the second processing circuit is further configured to implement at least one of a task list function and a calendar function.

73. The system of claim 72, wherein the identification device comprises a radio frequency identification circuit.

74. The system of claim 71, wherein the identification device comprises a barcode scanner.